

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM – The Gospel of Mark (Mark 4:1-20)

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Mark 4:1-9 And again He began to teach by the sea. And a great multitude was gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole multitude was on the land facing the sea. ² Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: ³ "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. ⁵ Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. ⁷ And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. ⁸ But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred." ⁹ And He said to them, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

This parable of the seeds is, perhaps, the most important of Jesus' parables. It explains the activity of Christ and His church.

He taught them many things by parables (v. 2): As we shall see, Jesus always taught using parables. However, parables are not simple "illustrations" that are designed to help people understand Jesus' teaching.

A sower went out to sow (v. 3): We will come to understand that the sower is Christ and His Church and the "seed" is the preaching of The Faith.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear (v. 9): Notice that the responsibility for understanding Christ's parables does not rest with the presenter, but with the hearer. This is the opposite of what we tend to think in regard to the presentation of the gospel.

It is good for us to pause and realize that Jesus was not an enabler of spiritual dullness. He was not "co-dependent" with those who like their ears "tickled" with easy sounding words that appeal to our flesh.

2Timothy 4:2-5 Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. ⁵ But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Mark 4:10-12 Then he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹² so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

The Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables (v. 10): Clearly, the disciples were mystified by the parables. In other words, they were clueless as to their meaning. But, this is the point.

Has been given to you (v. 11): The disciples represent those hearers that truly lean in and desire to understand their meaning.

The others represent those who fall under the category of Isaiah 6:9-10, namely the spiritually dull-witted who do not truly seek spiritual insight.

Seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding (v. 12): The point is that a true "seeker" wants to go beyond superficial "god-talk" to grasp Truth.

Shocking Insight: The parables are not designed to give simple illustrations and insights for Bible principles. They were designed to force the hearer to seek insight into the truth. They screen out superficiality.

Mark 4:13-20 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴ The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵ Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸ Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

Don't you understand this parable (v. 13): Here, again, we see Jesus NOT playing games and mollycoddling his followers. He demands spiritual and mental maturity from the disciples. **1Corinthians 13:11** When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

Hebrews 5:13-14 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

This parable explains the four typical reactions to the preaching of the gospel.

1. (Path People—the resistant ones) Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them (v. 15): These people are so hardened that Satan easily takes away the truth of the gospel.

2. (Rocky-Place People—the "fizzers") They have no root (vv. 16-17): These people become discouraged by trouble and persecution and abandon the gospel.

3. (Unfruitful People—the distracted ones) Worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word (v. 19): These are Christians who make a profession of faith but are fruitless because of their worldly-mindedness. They may talk a good "game", but their real priorities are seen in their fruitlessness.

1Corinthians 3:11-15 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone **builds** on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's **work**. ¹⁴ If what has been **built** survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Shockingly, many Christians do not realize that salvation (the "foundation") is by grace while rewards are for "work" (for what is "built").

2Corinthians 5:9-10 So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must **all appear** before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

4. (Productive People) Hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop (v. 20): These are the Christians that produce good fruit for Jesus.